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'Star Wars' Eyed as Bargaining Chip

Reagan Reported Far From Decision on Central Arms-Talk Issue

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The Reagan administration has begun internal discussions of whether President Reagan, in his Nov. 19-20 summit meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev should, ~~broach possible limitations~~ on "Star Wars" defense in return for Moscow's approval of deep cuts in the superpowers' offensive nuclear forces.

Administration sources said Reagan is far from a decision on this central issue in the U.S.-Soviet di-

ologue, whether to limit his plan for a strategic defense against nuclear missiles. Although some U.S. strategists favor swapping Star Wars restrictions for deep cuts, others—particularly in the Defense Department—have adamantly opposed such a deal.

With a little more than nine weeks left before the first U.S.-Soviet summit meeting in over six years, perhaps the most surprising thing emerging from interviews with several officials is that Reagan's approach to this linchpin arms issue is still unknown.

The impending U.S. visit of the new Soviet foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, may have an important bearing on the outcome, Soviet sources said Shevardnadze, who is due to arrive in New York late this week, is expected to bring details of Moscow's arms control proposals to Reagan and Secretary of State George P. Shultz. [Related story, Page A17.]

Officials said a second round of high level U.S.-Soviet talks, either in a second Shevardnadze visit to the United Nations in October, or in a Shultz trip to Moscow before the November summit, is a possibility.

A U.S. survey team of White House and State Department officials is in Geneva this weekend to discuss U.S.-Soviet procedures and arrangements for the nine hours of talks planned for Reagan and Gorbachev, who will be accompanied only by a few top advisers.

A separate U.S. negotiating team left Washington yesterday for the third round of U.S.-Soviet bargaining sessions on nuclear and space arms due to begin Thursday and end just before the summit. What happens in the Geneva arms talks in the next two months is likely to have a big impact on the Reagan-Gorbachev discussion.

A State Department study of the 11 previous U.S.-Soviet summit meetings indicates that the most positive results emerged from decisions and diplomatic discussions in the two months preceding the summits, rather than at the meetings themselves or in follow-up sessions. Thus, preparations for the November meeting are entering their most crucial period, if history is a guide, with considerable uncertainty about what Reagan, and to a lesser extent Gorbachev, will do and say.

In preparation for the summit, Reagan has begun chairing weekly National Security Council meetings

on summit topics, officials said. He has also been given six in a planned series of 25 "foundation" papers on Soviet history and society.

Administration officials have in mind truly dramatic cuts in offensive nuclear forces on the part of the Soviet Union and United States as the quid pro quo for any limitations that might be imposed on strategic defensive activities. Senior officials have talked about cuts in

offensive forces well beyond the 30 to 40 percent range being publicly discussed as an important part of any tradeoff. Whether the Soviets would go along with such an approach is unknown.

Because of the gridlock over arms-control proposals in Reagan's first term and the persistent lack of bureaucratic discipline, any serious discussion of arms control compromises with the Soviets will have to take place among a highly restricted group of officials at the very top. Few memos are going to be circulated suggesting compromise, said a senior official who nevertheless expressed the belief that Reagan will hear a full range of opinion from his closest advisers about the arms control possibilities.

In this case, the key advisers are Shultz, Weinberger, White House national security affairs adviser Robert C. McFarlane, White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan and CIA Director William J. Casey. Many in the White House believe

the first lady, Nancy Reagan, may also have an influence on her husband's thinking.

In public, the administration is seeking to dampen expectations that the Reagan-Gorbachev meeting will bring a breakthrough in U.S.-Soviet relations, which have reached a low point in the past five years.

High expectations, such as were generated by Gorbachev's Time Magazine interview and a subsequent meeting with U.S. senators, tend to build domestic and international pressure on Washington for compromises and, officials fear, could lead to a dangerous backlash in case of disappointment.

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